

In Response

News from Now-Here, 1986: A Response to "News from Nowhere, 1984"

Comunidad Los Horcones
Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico

Los Horcones is an experimental Walden Two community, founded in 1973, that applies behavior analysis to cultural design. This experiment is called a "walden two" community in honor of B. F. Skinner's (1948) *Walden Two* and because Skinner was the first to propose the possibility of such a community. We are not a community based on Skinner's novel, however, but on the science on which that novel is based (Horcones, 1982). In light of Skinner's recent "News from Nowhere, 1984" (Skinner, 1985), the readers of *The Behavior Analyst* might be interested in hearing about our community, its general operation, and its orientation.

Each newcomer to Los Horcones, like Skinner's Blair, has to dispose of old behavioral repertoires and to develop new ones. Everybody cooperates in this shaping process, employing one of the most powerful tools discovered by humans—behavioral technology. When Skinner's Blair came to Walden Two, he used an old Spanish War trick to gain entrance to the community—he changed his name. This ploy, however, does not gain very much; it is not a behavioral process. Our behavior does not change simply by changing our name; it changes by changing our environment (Horcones, 1980a). Skinner's Walden Two could not achieve a total change in Blair's behavior. Blair died too soon, with many questions and not enough answers, and without a thor-

ough enough understanding of the community to be convinced of its success.

Many Blairs come to Los Horcones. Fortunately, they have not died here. They do, however, leave the community because they too often question what goes on within the community without questioning enough what goes on outside (Horcones, 1977a, 1983). The admission committee advises newcomers in this regard:

A new society requires changes in our behavior, in our reinforcers. There are effective ways to achieve this. We are going to help you, but you need to put your part in this endeavor. This is going to be an experiment; it could be successful or not, we don't know. We must accept that we are doing an experiment. (Horcones, 1979a)

Many Blairs also join our community and tell us how to do a better job. Unfortunately, they contribute little to improve the community. They talk a lot, but do little else. Many of them come to the community looking for a chance to live a happy life. Being happy, though, is achieved through changing the environment, which is a job for all of us, including the newcomers. Some newcomers to the community also think we are anarchists. It is true that we have no institutionalized government, religion, or economy, but this does not mean the community has no organization, that its members have no religious beliefs, or that we have no economic relationships with the world outside (Horcones, 1975b, 1979b, 1981a, 1981b, 1985a).

A few people founded Los Horcones, but many help it survive (Horcones, 1981c) through the organization of our population of twenty to twenty-five members into a "communitarian-behavioral government." It is communitarian

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because it is formed by all of us—of all and for all; it is behavioral because it is based on a behavior analysis of government. In this community, we have no leaders because no one reinforces the requisite behavior. At Los Horcones, each member is in a certain way a governor because anyone can intervene into the decision-making process in important ways. We do not feel impotent when confronting decisions made by the majority or the minority. Some people say that we are able to do this because we are few in number. The issue, however, is not one of numerical quantity, but one of effective techniques. These techniques teach members that the common good is a strong reinforcer for every member. To the surprise of those who misunderstand Skinner's *Walden Two*, a living *Walden Two* has a "personalized government."

In our twelve years of existence, we have defined a social change strategy based on behavior analysis (Horcones, 1984a). This strategy can be summarized in the following way: "Don't try to take away something without having put something else in its place." We are creating a new society by providing an alternative to the present society, instead of destroying it. This strategy for social change is an extension of the strategy of eliminating behavior by reinforcing that which is incompatible with it.

In today's world, unfortunately, destructive behavior often seems to be more reinforced than constructive behavior. People attack institutions and blame others for their problems. In doing so, they put themselves into an ongoing cycle of aggression and counter-aggression, with all the human suffering that this produces. The solution is not to respond with pacifism to aggression, but rather to build a society where aggression will not be reinforced.

At Los Horcones, we have been careful in becoming people who behave less and less by following rules, and who behave more and more through the natural consequences of our behavior. In 1973, we wrote our behavior code (Horcones, 1985b), but have modified it through the years. All the behaviors written into the

code have been selected by taking into consideration the effects they would have on the total environment (physical, biological, behavioral, and ecological) (Horcones, 1977b). In the beginning, the members followed rules, but little by little our behavior has come to be maintained by its natural consequences. Gradually, the behavior code has been forgotten.

It has been easy to prevent exploitation. Everybody works for everyone, and everyone works for everybody. With respect to alienation, however, life has been less easy. We have had to investigate processes of natural reinforcement in order to discover some rules to help us establish behavior under the control of natural consequences (Horcones, 1981d). We do not only do what will benefit us today, but also what will benefit us tomorrow. We believe that people will survive only by learning to take into consideration the long-term consequences of their behavior. This is why we are building a *Walden Two* community now. In doing so, however, we are not infringing on powerful people outside of our community where power is based on economics and politics. We do not want to control the economy or the politics of any country. We want to learn to be simple human beings, and to have a lifestyle that makes us happy in our daily lives and in our daily face-to-face encounters.

In 1960, Los Horcones was not yet begun, but the "hippie" movement was under way. That movement, however, never built anything. Many individuals who participated in this movement had good intentions, but a new society is not made with good intentions alone, or by asking only for "peace and love." Rather, a new society is developed by objectively analyzing why peace and love have not occurred and by discovering how people can learn to love and be peaceful. The answers to these questions are not obtained in drugs or rituals, but through the scientific study of human behavior. For us, behaviorism and humanism are not antagonistic (Horcones, 1978a). Unfortunately, we are occasionally subject to some adverse effects stemming from the

1960s movement because people sometimes come here looking for a community life full of orgies, drugs, and few responsibilities (Horcones, 1981a). All of us here have strong feelings about personal liberty and dignity—liberty, because we as people can control our own destiny, and dignity, because now we have achieved it as a species.

At Los Horcones, members are not paid individually. We do, though, acquire money as a group, which we need because we are not yet self-sufficient. We work, though, not just to make money, but more importantly for the satisfaction of working. We learn to enjoy what we do—everything from planting a radish seed to conducting scientific research. We enjoy washing dishes because we have learned that cleanliness and order, and all the natural consequences of washing dishes, function as reinforcers. Presently, we have no dishwashing machine, but someday we will. Machines, however, are but labor-saving devices; they should not be “satisfaction-saving devices.” Sometimes we *should* wash by hand, cut alfalfa with a scythe, and milk a cow by hand. Machines also are not “independence-saving devices.” Although we have a tractor to plant with, we learn to plant without it (Horcones, 1975a).

Although intermediate technologies are often thought best designed for Third World countries, developed countries should use them more. How much energy can Third World countries save if they have so little to begin with? And what waste do those who live off waste have? We use intermediate technology in our community not because we are poor, but because we want to leave a better world for future generations (Horcones, 1980b). It is necessary to remember that beauty is not only a matter of size—big can be beautiful and small can be ugly. Walden Two can solve its problems not just because it is small, but because it has an effective problem-solving technology. When one is naturally reinforced for what one does, everything one does is new. It is not “too much of the same thing.” When people are beautiful, it is not their face that is beautiful—they are beautiful

in their behavior. There is no problem of “too many faces.”

We do not have teaching machines, not for lack of need, but for lack of funds. Our instruction system, however, is personalized (Keller, 1968; Keller & Sherman, 1974). Little by little, we program the academic material for our children, and are reinforced for doing so by seeing them learn. Our school has flexible schedules. The children complete their day's objectives and are then free to play or engage in other activities. Not only are our children free and happy, but so are the teachers. Our instruction system makes this possible.

Our work gives us exercise. We load a truck with dirt using a shovel, first with one arm and then with an other, instead of lifting weights in a gym. We strengthen our wrists and fingers by milking cows; we exercise our legs by walking from place to place when working, etc. (Horcones, 1980c). We also play sports, seeking self-competition instead of competing against others (Horcones, 1984b). We have a form of exercise called “exerother” (Horcones, 1984c)—exercising while entertaining another. For example, those who like to run, run while giving a child a piggy-back ride, or pull a child in a wagon, or jump rope with the children.

We like to travel, but we obtain enough enjoyment from the beauty of the world that is our own at the moment, hence there are few places we have time to visit in our lifetime. Much remains on our land to be seen even though we have been living in this region for twelve years. The travelers are not the ones who destroy the beautiful things in the world—it is their behavior that destroys. All of us could go all over the world and leave it as beautiful as we found it if we would learn to take care of it (Horcones, 1978b, 1980d).

Like Frazier, our favorite theme is the following: “A Walden Two community can solve most of the problems the world faces today. We can design, here and now, a society that maintains a friendly, productive, and enjoyable life.” At Los Horcones, we believe that there is a chance of building a new culture and that the

present culture will not destroy us. Since the culture has produced the science of physics, chemistry, biology, and behavior ("behaviorology" as Los Horcones calls it), we are sure that it eventually will discover effective strategies for how to use all these sciences for people, not against them. We believe that there is enough time. If there isn't, nothing will change for Los Horcones.

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